

The Leedys and Their Difficulties.

The Leedys, or Leedyites, as nicknamed, had their origin in the Owl Creek church, Ohio, in 1858. The original trouble was the single mode of washing feet. One was expelled, and because others sympathized, they were also expelled. After this they developed other differences, which are well set forth by Eld. Bashor, in his report of a conference held with them for the purpose of a union, given below. No union was effected at that conference, but was left till the Dayton convention.

After that an organization was formed.

But the bitterness of previous years was not buried effectually, and when difficulties arose, the doctrinal questions came up again. Several council meetings were held, but nothing accomplished.

Recently a writer in the EVANGELIST charged one of those brethren with dragging a whole church down to hell, rather than yield to a majority or get out of the church; and now he demands that his testimony also be heard.—ED.

P. J. BROWN ON BRETHREN CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

Ankenytown, O., June 12, 1888.

We, (P. J. Brown and Isaac Kilhefner) are here as representative men of the Brethren church. Our mission is to ascertain whether there is a Brethren church at this place and in this neighborhood, and in order to define what we mean by a Brethren church, we will state what the essential characteristics of a Brethren church are.

1. They are a body of intelligent believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who have been baptized into Jesus Christ by trine immersion, and esteem one another, and bear with one another in love, keep the ordinances of the house of God as they were delivered to them by inspired writers, and who are able and willing to help in building up the cause of Christ by their presence and prayers in the public meetings and by contributing according to their several abilities, in spiritual, physical and financial aid—and where a difference of honest and candid opinion prevails as to the ways and means of performing any kind of Christian work or church ordinances, the majority of the congregation, when fairly expressed and officially declared, is to prevail and all acquiesce until such time as the minority may be able, by sound logic and in the spirit of Christian courtesy convince the majority of their error, and by a fair and intelligent vote reverse the decision. Then, as before, the minority yields to the majority. But a minority is in no case to be deprived of procuring advice and friendly and Christian counsel and aid from ministers or even intelligent deacons or lay members in adjoining Brethren churches. But when the question in dispute is settled, only the members belonging to the congregation where the difference exists are of right allowed to vote, and the question should remain settled, at least until the matter had a fair chance to test itself as to the wisdom of the conclusion. And above all, a spirit of Christian love and forbearance must prevail—for where strife and contention is every evil work will soon prevail and destroy those for whom Christ died.

Now we wish to know whether we have a Brethren church here to answer to the foregoing description. If so, how many?

Adopted as the basis of Brethren church government, June 26, 1888.

On the day and year above written, Bro. Brown met in council at the solicitation of some who secretly solicited names to a petition for foreign help to deal with a large percent of the Brethren church at this place in consequence of a difference of faith in the observance of the Lord's supper. After the opening exercises he assumed the chair without any invitation from any one present in the council, but contrary to the wishes of a large number in attendance. After some preliminary remarks, he read an instrument of writing, of which the above is an exact copy, saving the names in brackets, omitting the last paragraph, which was added after the last council. After an explanation was called for in reference to settling differences in the performance of church ordinances by voting, and a few moments of friendly criticism, Bro. Brown said, "Are you still determined to stick to your opinion, or will you yield to the majority of the church?" and demanded a definite answer. Our reply was substantially as follows: I will yield to the majority of the church in all matters that are within the jurisdiction of the church to decide, such as building houses of worship, the time and place of erecting these buildings, the size, arrangement and manner of finishing and ornamenting them—all should be left with the church to decide, so long as within

bounds of our creed, the Bible. The majority should be respected in the choice of a pastor, the most suitable time for protracted efforts, and in short, everything saving doctrinal matters. God has never delegated the power to his church to make any changes in the observance of any of his ordinances that came into the church of Christ by Christ's authority, and recorded in the New Testament by inspiration, hence must be settled by a preponderance of Bible testimony. Only a few years ago we censured and criticised the good old Brethren severely for legislating in their conferences for the government of the church, but within a few years we have progressed so rapidly that one man can formulate a basis of Brethren church government authorizing or empowering a local church how to administer baptism, or what elements should constitute the Lord's Supper, and the minister in charge must yield to the majority of the church.

In regard to surrendering my views, I have to say as the Master did to the rebellious Jews: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." John 7: 16. The views I hold and advocate on the supper question are not my views, but the views and doctrines of the primitive church. And as the honest, sincere and conscientious convictions of many years, careful, deep and prayerful study of this mooted question, regard it as the most sacred of all the ordinances of God's house should be observed with the deepest solemnity of all of God's institutions.

I offered to abandon any views that I could not successfully defend, or exchange any belief or practice, providing Bro. Brown would offer me something better. The only reply was that Bro. Leedy was a little out of order, alluding to his paper, because it wasn't before the meeting. He declared that the supper question could not be discussed in that council that this was not the place for it. But if Bro. Leedy will bring it to our state convention he can have his views ventilated. In my humble way of thinking, the proper place and time to discuss the points at issue in any case is in the court where the case is tried and at the time of the trial, and a refusal to do so is inconsistent.

P. J. BROWN AT THE DAYTON CONVENTION.

"I have the honor to report our views in full. They are here set forth. (hands the chairman a copy of the New Testament). After the committee on church government handed in their report, the chairman said, the title of this report is the 'New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' The whole convention rose and sang the doxology and the report was unanimously adopted."—Report of Dayton Convention.

Thank God for the adoption of that report. By the grace of God I am determined to make it the rule, line and plummet to work out my salvation. Why should our local church records hand down to the rising generation a counterfeit Brethren church government that is only a drop in the sea when compared with the one adopted in the Dayton convention.

If Bro. Brown's views on church government are fully set forth in the report adopted by the Dayton convention, why formulate another, feigning it to be a description of a Brethren church, and after it passes a meeting convert it into a basis of church government. If he intended to formulate a new basis of church government, why not say so, and place the title at the head instead of the end, so the brethren might have the means of knowing what they were voting for?

The chairman dismissed the meeting, and in company with others, repaired to a private house and formulated another paper, of which the following is a copy:

"Believing that it is useless to attempt any longer to work with Isaac Leedy and those who indorse his peculiar views on the supper question, and that his views are entirely at variance with the views and practice of the Brethren church, therefore, we, the undersigned, members of the Ankenytown and North Liberty Brethren church, agree to work in harmony with the faith and practice of the general brotherhood of the Brethren church, and will regard all who refuse and fail to sign this agreement, as having forfeited their rights to the communion of the church or general brotherhood; and we further agree to meet in council at the Ankenytown meeting house on the 26th day of June, 1888,

and then and there make a final settlement of all the difficulties in which we have been involved in consequence of the said peculiar views of the said Leedy."

This paper was extensively circulated among those who were not in sympathy with my views, and in this way procured a majority, so Bro. Brown could now safely offer and pass his papers, which he also did. We were again called on to recant. It was then and there that we asked Bro. Brown the question in reference to trine immersion, alluded to in the EVANGELIST of July 25th, under the heading, "The Supper Question," where he accuses me of having been "a disturber of the peace of the church for several years by advocating and trying to force upon the church a doctrine utterly at variance with the general faith and practice of the church." . . . "Some people claim to be so conscientious that they seem to think they must drag a whole church down to hell rather than yield to the majority or leave the church."

It don't require the tongue of a prophet to tell that this last slur was intended for me. I have no doubt but that many of the EVANGELIST family will ask themselves the question, "I wonder if these things are so?"

I have been in the Ashland City church. Did I try to force an erroneous doctrine on them? If so, declare it through the EVANGELIST. I also preached for the Brethren at Fair Haven, at West Independence, at Bellfontaine, and in Perry Co., in what is known as the Helser settlement. No, brethren, I appeal to you in all candor, did I ever preach or try to force publicly or privately on any of the above churches a doctrine that is at variance with the doctrine and practice of the Brethren? If so publicly declare it. The above are the only places that it has been my privilege to visit. That there has been trouble for a number of years in the North Liberty church I don't deny, but do deny that I ever attempted to force any doctrine upon any of her members. The force work comes in on the other side of the house. All that we ever asked of the brethren at this place was to grant us the liberty guaranteed to us in the joint council held at North Liberty on the 4th day of Oct. 1882, where our differences were compared and adjusted, preparatory to a consolidation at the next convention. The report of this council was published in the Progressive Christian of Oct. 11, 1882, from which we make the following quotation:

"On opening the meeting for the business of the day, it was found that the Leedy brethren differed from the brethren in three points. 1. They omit the use of the Lord's prayer, holding that its use in all our meetings is not essential to Christian worship, that its use is not binding, neither is it objectionable. 2. That the Lord's supper should be composed, in part, of lamb's flesh, to the prohibition of all other meat. 3. That no questions should be asked of believers while kneeling in the baptismal waters, all questions to be asked before.

I will only state the adjustment of the second difference, as that is the only one involved in controversy:

"Of the second difference, the brethren do not make the use of lamb's flesh at the Lord's supper a condition. They teach that the holding of the Supper is more essential than the material of which it is composed. They have no objection to the use of lamb's flesh at the Lord's supper, and could allow the Leedy brethren the privilege of choice. They, on the other hand, are willing when they visit other congregations, and other food than lamb's flesh is used, to forego their preference and allow our practice.

The decision arrived at by the council was that the Brethren and the Leedy brethren who felt like doing so, should treat each other as brethren in one faith, but no formal union of organization be effected until a general conference be called and a fuller expression be obtained from the brethren.

It will be seen from the date of the above council that nearly eight months intervened from the joint council until the Dayton convention, thus affording ample time for all parties fully to consider and weigh the matter carefully, and if either party thought best not to affect the proposed consolidation, so declare before the convention.

Now let us hear the report of the committee, appointed at the Ashland convention to investigate this matter:

(Concluded on Sixth Page.)